

hungry! • Omen 52.2 • Submit to the Omen. • Oh man, it's the Omen! • Remember, the Omen loves you. • The Omen sheep are hungry! • Omen 52.2 • Submit to the Omen. • Oh man, it's the Omen! • Remember, the Omen loves you. • The

52.2

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Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Ida: Soy sauce

Finn: Salt

Sarah-Marie: Jamaican curry

Front Cover: Ida Kao

Back Cover: Ida Kao

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in any format (no PDFs please) by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, the Omen Office or Ida's mailbox (1240)

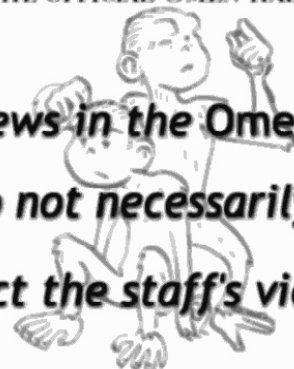
Policy

The Omen is a bimonthly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: **we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous.** Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fanfiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. **Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of The Omen, the Omen editrix, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.**

Anyone can submit to the Omen, but you can also become Omen staff! Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for meetings, which usually takes place every Thursday night in the basement of Merrill B (past the laundry room); the only permanent position is that of editrix. You should come and answer the staff question. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on every other Thursday in Saga, the post office, online at <http://expelallo.men>, and just about any other place we can find to put it.

THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:



Views in the Omen (5)
Do not necessarily (7)
Reflect the staff's views (5)

EDITORIAL

Ida Kao

It is now officially summer, after all the virtual celebrations for the 2020 graduating Div IIIs, and I have the billing department at my awful OBGYN's office to passively aggressively call to change their claim so I don't need to pay any more goddamn copays, yet here I am, sitting in my bedroom in Virginia typing out the editorial for the special pandemic edition! Now that the restrictions are loosening, it might mostly count as a summer edition, but I started laying this out while all the stay-at-home orders started rolling out across the US. And honestly, everyone is predicting a second wave of cases (and therefore restrictions) is in the works, so I'm not worried about my cover becoming irrelevant. (By the way, it was shamelessly ripped off from the print edition of the article titled "Worried About Social Distancing?" by the New York Times. Can you spot all the names of ex-editrixes, other important Omen people, and stupid jokes I put in there?)

Even with the serious lack of submissions leaving the sheep lean and raving mad, enough time has passed that I need to address a few things. First of all, shout out to the fully grown man who apparently has nothing better to do than check The Omen's Twitter account (@HampshireOmen, for those of you wondering about the handle) and help out a super stressed, overworked undergraduate. Hell, said fully grown person even emailed Chloe (our previous editrix who taught me everything I know about InDesign, which is admittedly still not a lot) early on in Spring 2019 about a potential Omen funeral. I appreciate your Tweet about my Infrequently Asked Questions from Omen 51.1, Stephen! Now I've got the Twitter handles of a ton of past editors and learned that Daxel is unwilling to share why there's a snorkel in the Omen office, that there used to be an entire Hampedia page for The Omen and for most of the past editors, that "editrix" did not enter the Omen vernacular until F. Stewart Taylor's time, and for some reason a bunch of them ended up in the Seattle area. I hope the bumbling response to this pandemic (which, honestly, is a direct result of late stage capitalism) doesn't end up killing any of you or make you homeless.

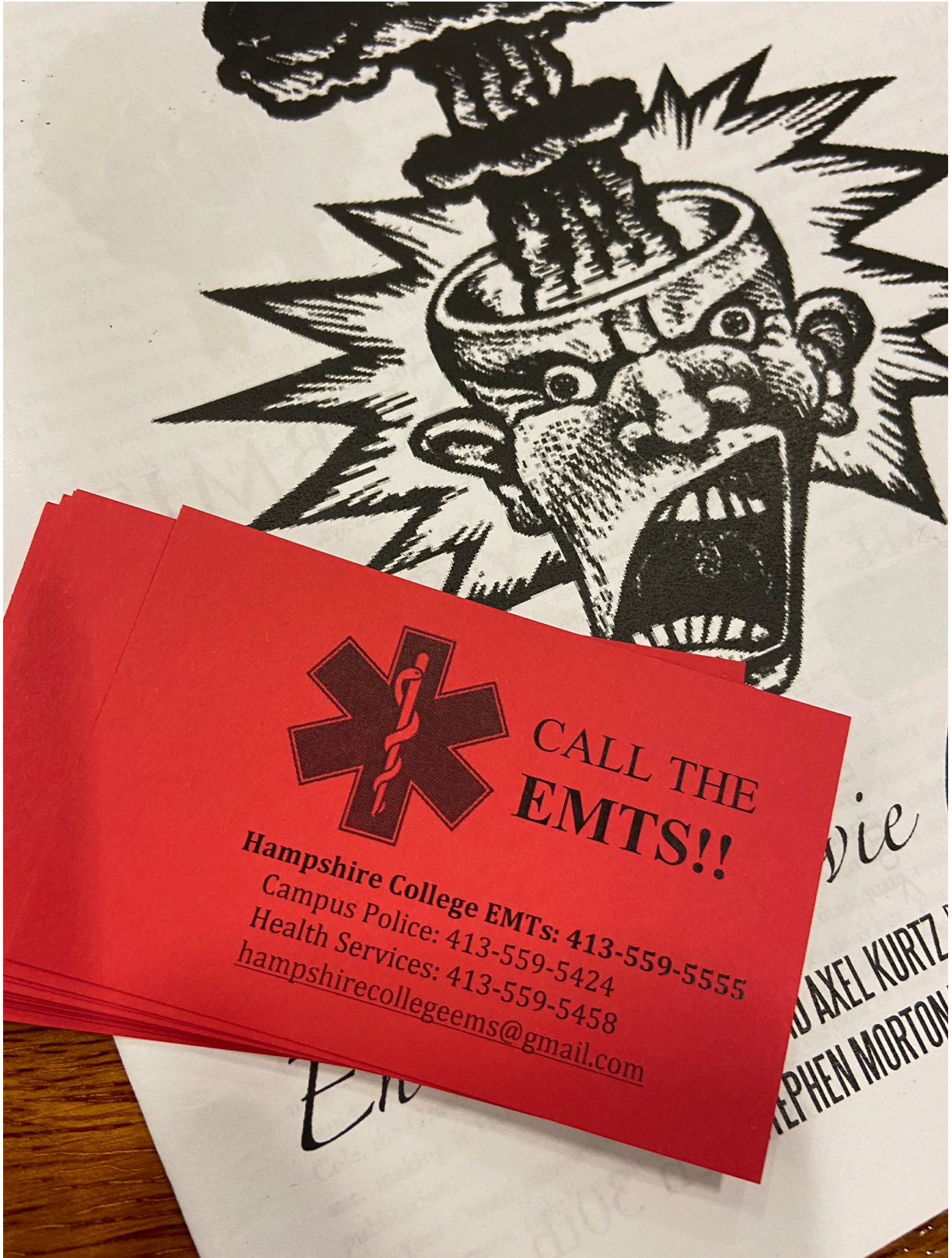
I also wanted to ask alums when they anticipate being free within the next school year so it doesn't end up a bunch of current students around a fire pit on the Library Lawn who have never even picked up an issue. Some cool peeps at Alumni Relations, like Karen Sullivan and Melissa Mills-Dick 01 (and partner of former editor Justin Philpot) who has moved to Advancement managed to find a bunch more emails, so perhaps I will be asking you all directly! I was going to use them to plan the 50th anniversary pig roast (which, ironically, is occurring during the 52nd Volume and will mostly feature vegetables as I and much of this campus does not eat meat), but with the coronavirus shutting down the entire Five Colleges Consortium, I guess it's been delayed for at least another year.

Just our luck, huh? It would be great if some of those poor unfed alums could feed the hungry sheep and submit some content. Hell, if any other reader would like to send in stuff, and someday you too could enjoy a dietary restriction-inclusive pig roast! (You can partake in said pig roast whether you submit or not, but it would be greatly appreciated if you could send in old schoolwork, random creative projects, spicy memes, or a cross stitch with a quote that could be used to shoo away Tinder matches that send creepy messages; r/PreyingMantis on Reddit has some great screenshots if you need inspiration.)

I definitely had a lot more to say when I started this editorial way back in March, but I've just about forgotten everything. More generally, congratulations to our new Student Trustee Alternate, Nicholas Bythrow, who submitted some of his poetry back in March! It was put in Hate, not because I or anyone else hates it, but... well, just read it. Brownie points for mentioning that he did journalism in high school in his statement, although I have found serious faults in journalism as a practice and especially as a trade/profession in the time since I became interested in the subject myself. I definitely miss having the extra time to write about whatever I want and putting it in The Omen, but I already don't have the self-initiative to create a whole series of works centered around one topic.

I, uh, don't really know how to transition from that last paragraph into the conclusion, so I guess I'll just come right out and admit I don't know how, and pretend it's an adequate substitute for putting in a bit of extra effort to come up with something clever. Cheers to another absolute debacle of a school year!

SECTION SPEAK



Alum Love <3

Just want to say, I'm glad to see the Omen surviving through the current difficulties at Hampshire. I believe in you. Go, outlive every other publication.

Beatrice (Corfman) Erikson (F12)

Dear Omen,

Please accept this photograph of Cyborg Bernie Sanders and place it wherever you see fit.

Much love,

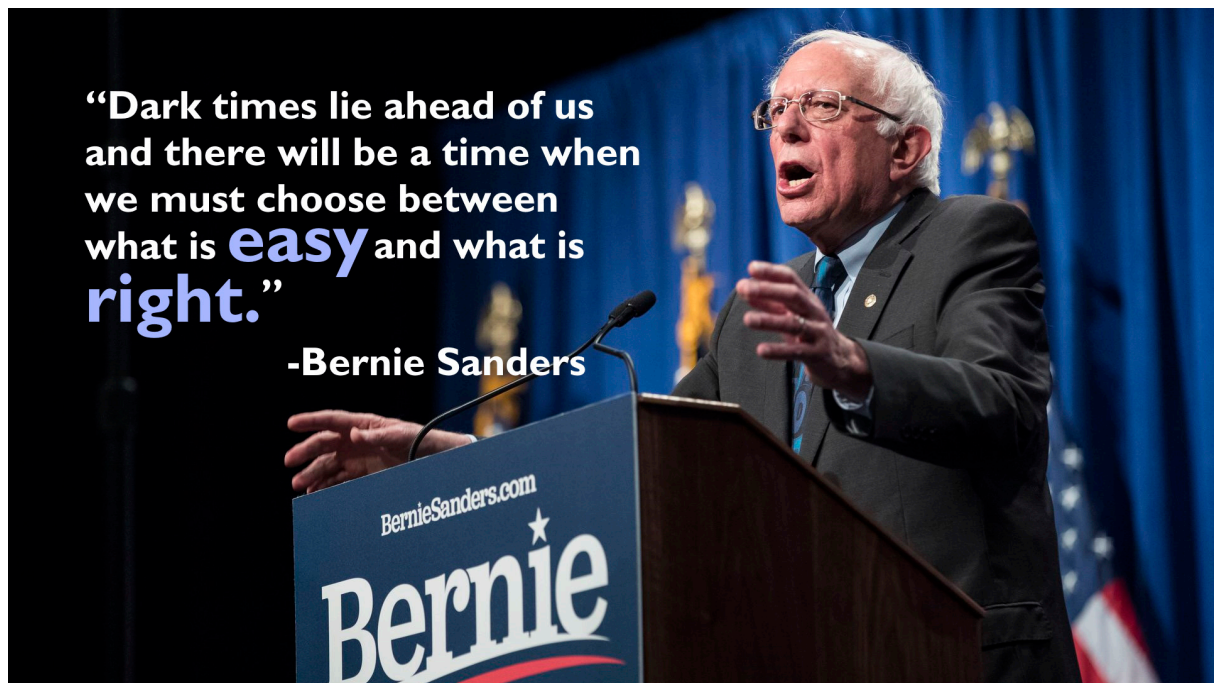
Jonathan Gardner F11



Section Lies

More Alum Love... ?

Submitted by Jonathon Gardner F11



Submitted by Chloe Omelchuck F15

Prompt: Just dialogue. Write 20 lines of dialogue between two characters. Lines have a specific number of words, as follows: 11, 5, 6, 2, 4, 6, 12, 1, 5, 17, 8, 3, 12, 8, 12, 6, 10, 4, 7. No setting or character descriptions, no blocking. Just back and forth dialogue between two characters.

"How can you be so annoying? Just sit with the goldfish."

"I ate it this morning."

“What?! How could you do this?”

“A knife.”

“Nooooo! Lalala, no details!”

“And also a small frying pan.”

“Hold on, you don’t ever cook, did you use my kitchen supplies?”

“Yes.”

“I am so disgusted, urgh!”

“I... I just felt lonely. You had been spending more time with him than with me. And I was hungry.”

“...Oh. Sorry. Ummm, well, are you full now?”

“I need more.”

“I changed my mind, I don’t forgive you. He was my best friend.”

“Not my fault goldfish are small.”

“But you did eat him. I thought you liked him?”

“I eliminated the competition.”

“Just sit quietly by the plant, okay?”

plant inches away nervously

The Face on Mars

By Finian Scott

In July of 1976, three children lay on their backs in their yard. Eyes fixed on the glittering formation of Sagittarius. Chubby fingers tracing along the imagined lines, closing one eye and putting their heads together to try to all see the image of an archer form together. The youngest of the three, points her finger to the left, to a yellow, glowing dot.

“That’s Mars,” she announces. “One day I’m going to go to be an astronaut and I’m gonna go to Mars.”

35.8 billion miles away, a small ship, called Viking 1, orbits Mars. Viking 1’s purpose was to collect raw data regarding the question of life on Mars. It has a camera but was never supposed to. The ship was designed to collect soil samples, and to test the chemical makeup of the samples, as well as gathering raw data about the environment. Cameras weren’t seen as scientific; graphs and numbers are scientific.

In fact, the camera was only put on after a joke. Carl Sagen asked NASA what they would do with all the numbers and graphs, if a Martian polar bear walked by their ship. So on the cameras went. Not the best they had to offer, but enough.

As Mars turns, rounding out one of its 24 hour days, the sun streaks across the canyons and hills of Cydonia. Leaking down into a dip between the Arandas Crater, and the Bamberg Crater, the light hits a rock. And it breathes to life. Sucking carbon dioxide into stony lungs. Shadows cast across his eyes, as they slowly crack open, dust and sand crumbling away, running down his cheeks. He’s awake. For the few moments each year, at this time, when the sun hits his face just right, and he wakes up. It won’t last. He knows this. 24 hours is so short, maybe if he lived on Venus, with her days lasting 116 Martian days, he could enjoy life a little longer.

He attempts to cock his head, the hard rock around his face keeping him firmly in place. A strange object floats in the air above him. Bobbing and twitching awkwardly. He squints, as a flash goes off. Capturing his few fleeting moments of life. And he wonders. What will the creatures who took his picture think of him?

Viking 1 brought its pictures back to Earth, along with the soil samples it gathered. The face on Mars was suddenly everywhere. Followed by the results of the soil tests. Positive. Kind of. The dirt might have been home to living microbes. Little balls of life before life; give them a few million years and there might be something intelligent. But only one, of the several tests performed on the surface of Mars come back positive. And that was enough to stir the public.

The young soon-to-be-astronaut heard about it from her mother; who learned it from the 6o’clock news. And she sped to the TV, to stare into the eyes of the face. The camera changed his features. Missing data gave him a nostril, freckles, decorated the contours of his jaw with tiny black dots. His red skin was blanked out, made a dull gray. But it was undeniable. A face. She traced his face, cut out his picture from the newspaper, hung him up on her wall so she could study the details of the shadows outlining his eyes and lips. She wanted to meet this man. Meet his makers.

Every 687 Earth days, for a few moments, the sun would hit Cydonia just right, and he would crack alive. Never aware for long enough to see the dot of Earth, far in the distant sky. The face never forgot the little bobbing metal craft, floating above him. He theorized, while he could, what it might mean. And he theorized of its makers. Of the people who saw his features. How weird they must look, with arms to build shiny flying machines, and long legs to walk across the surface of the planet he calls home.

In the 90s, the now astronaut was working when she heard the news. A new shuttle, with a better camera, went back to Cydonia. It took a picture of the face. The face never saw this new camera. They just missed each other by a few short hours.

Nothing. Just a rock between two canyons.

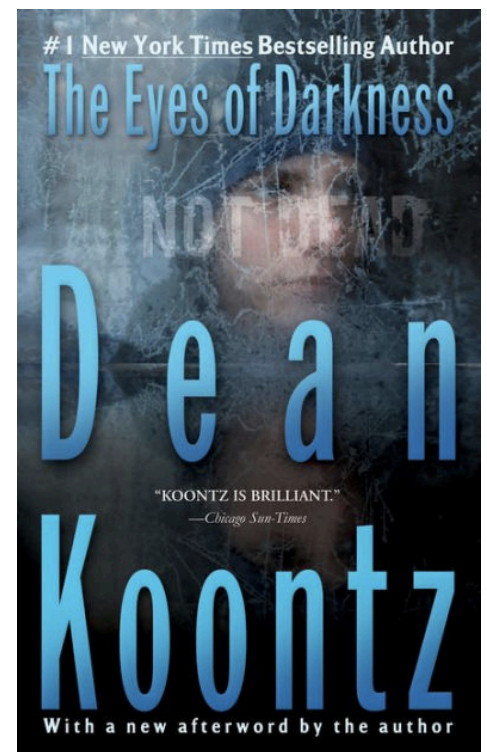
No intelligent makers, no forces to ask questions to, no being trapped in dust to project her hopes on. Just a rock captured at the perfect moment.

Section Hate

Plagues 2020

Submitted by Sarah-Marie Taylor

Okay hear me out, did you know that some of the world's deadliest plagues happened in 1620, 1720, 1820, 1920, and now 2020, coincidence?? I think not. Now while some of us may already know this information, I think this is too much of a consecutive pattern to just brush off. My theory is that this is the government doing population control every century ending in 2, 0. Just think, no way could this be a freak accident for five centuries straight. And while the first few were so long ago and very severe, I think the government has perfected it's formula. Just watch the news, the Coronavirus, while still being a danger, has mostly only killed off those with a weak immune system and the elderly. That sounds like the government weeding out the weak to build a stronger society, and forced population control. There is a book written in 1981 called "The Eyes of Darkness" which is a science fiction novel that says that there will be a extremely contagious disease that will break out in the year 2020, that will start in Wuhan China and will rapidly spread around the globe. Some say it's prediction or weird voodoo that this information turned out to be true. But I don't. And I'm not surprised. The author just used the facts by combing through what history and science had to offer. In this paper I'll be...



Universe: Cosmos

By Nick Bythrow

Universe is an ever-expanding collection of poetry highlighting the light and dark aspects of existence.

Cosmos

In the beginning there was nothing, not even darkness.
It was a grayscale mix-match of something we can't ever understand.
A stillness settled on the nonexistent horizon,
And suddenly the universe had a reason to exist.

Before long an unknown tide of black and white consumed the sky.
A swelling ocean of atmospheric pressure combining dark and light.
The undecided decisions made by existence as it became
Are the restless blueprints that led us to today.

Spherical sculptures designed by chance and nonexistent hope
Gave rise to every teetering heart on emotion's thin tightrope.
What a shame that it took so long to end up as it is,
But maybe that's what makes its beauty so vivid.

Like a timeline built out of scrap-metal parts the universe expanded,
The ebb and flow of null-gravity seas where creation had landed.
For as the world crashed into existence, alone yet fully whole,
Its spark became the endless range of the soul.

A formation of transfixed repose as holes dot blackened space.
An outline of unscripted reality is perfectly arranged.
Elements, now lost to time, slowly settle in
As the cosmos find the open strength to finally begin.

Constellations

Day and night leave shadows of misery,
Every tragic flaw is in their presence.
Surely nauseating as it must seem, I'm hoping,
Praying for some other essence here.
Yet even twilight settles on a familiar frontier,
Nothing but cacophony and cold.
Floating over valleys of unsightly poses,
There's not that much that I could really fear.

But as the daylight creeps away and all is dark,
My heartbeat's only a momentary drum.
It's taking all my virtue not to fall apart

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Yet it feels like this is simply sink or swim.
The Tree may glow in heaven-sent golden light,
But it doesn't do that much to save my soul.
Looking up I sigh and think "Well, what's new?"
It's something I'll just have to grow used to.

As shadows cast themselves against the moonlit ground,
I can't help but look up to the sky.
Seeking answers hidden somewhere in the stars,
A flipped switch discovers something new.
Beings of light hidden up within the dark,
Every star a point in its making.
Permanent relations to the human eye
That never would have been without our knowing.

How rare is it that the stars above have shapes themselves?
How perfectly aligned they have become!
As if they had been strung together by God's hands,
All so they could accompany at need!
A chance encounter with patterns of the heavens
Breeches over something I'd had sown;
For so long I'd believed myself to be as one,
But perhaps it's not as lonely as I'd thought.

While the sharp winds may bite at my cheeks,
And the mountains of my dreams may be out of reach,
I look to the shapes in the stars, their permanent glow,
And for the moment just their presence makes me feel less alone.

Asteroid

A sculpture of dull crystalline fragments,
Overreactive to the push of gravity.
Alone in this space, hardened by years of distress,
Never seeking time to discover what is best...

Crater-maker, planet-shaker, yet I'm on my own,
A gray heart in the middle of this blankness.
I want to push away and find a place to belong,
But everywhere I land erupts in ash.

Every little fracture takes me in, breaks me in,
Until I'm just another puzzle piece abound.
While I know the belt I'd come from,
I can't say I am done but what I do know is
That sanctuary failed.

For I had a choice, swimming out there in the dark,
Whether to conjoin our whether to depart,
And while I would rather the latter and be torn away,
I can't help but think that someday it will change.

It's vain, I knew it when I first saw
The supernova glowing from these bones.
Yet no matter how many miseries I endure,
I can't help but find hope's fractured stir!

But how could such spinning, such hurtling give in,
In this chamber without light or the wind?
Surely I haven't made up my mind?
I didn't mind being lost till I was terrified.

Oh, if only to glance back, surely I would,
To rewind and remit my mistakes!
But I am destined to crash and to burn,
And bring all the beauty with me!

So while I endure the cold and the vapidty,
I will try as hard as I can to garner empathy.
To understand my fellow rocks floating along,
Unaware yet too knowing of our future cacophonic song.

I'm not ready, no, never, could never for sure
Be prepared for what I must become.
For while I'm gray now so's the smoke on touchdown,
When my body becomes one with the dirt!

As my fire rises I can't take back the flame,
No matter how badly I wish it would rain.
I guess for now I'll just keep hurtling along
Until inevitable destruction ends me...

...But would that be so wrong?

Pōwehi

While the years were just beginning, I hadn't understood,
But I knew soon enough beneath creation's darkened hood.
For while we were here you decreed to teach me all you can
Before the universe decided to hold you in its hands.

Through good and bad you stood there, the pusher and the catch,
The one who called out softly yet hardened as we met.

So maybe it was me who didn't fully find the clues
Of one last solemn August followed by January blues.
While I never really knew my heart still questioned why,
As memories of love came flooding in from the front lines:
Do you remember all the creatures that I showed you in the book?
I can't forget the fantasies from your own where I had looked.
Although sometimes apart and surely sometimes we'd disagree,
As dusk settled its way in, did it matter our broken creeds?
For when everything was falling, you'd stopped and made it right.
If only I could do the same and give you some more time.

The universe exceeds at being the giver and the thief,
Granting us the heat before it takes away the leaves.
So when I saw you laying there with the sheet up to your chest,
I understood which path on which the universe had set.
While anger set my heart ablaze and made me want to rage,
The calmness on your face gave me pause within my haze.
And while I couldn't help the heavy heart that followed suit,
My grief caught in my chest and rendered me but mute.
How could this be the end? How could this be your fall?
I wanted to fight back but your mountain was too tall.
I just wished it to go back to the way it was before,
When light was in your eyes and not halfway to the Door.

I'd give it all away just so you could speak again,
From your last remaining breath to your gasp when life began.
So you could see the sunrise climb its way above the dirt
And one last time remember the beauty of the Earth.
I'll miss you every morning, but I know you have to go.
You said it would be easy, but why's it have to be so slow?
As your cheeks paled by the dawn, I noticed something in your eyes:
Every open-ended question had finally been surmised.
I won't pretend to get it, and I won't pretend to try,
I'll keep it in my heart for when I'm older and know why.
For now, it's speculation as the day without you starts:
Maybe history's an echo we only learn at dark.

While the years have carried on, and I still don't understand,
I know that soon enough I'll hold the answer in my hands.
So maybe when I get there, we can speak of what we've learned
And find the truth in endings that endings let us earn.

Satellite

I know what I am, orbiting so carefully,

A balancing act between wants and reprieve.
Although I can't stand it in my chest anymore,
I steer clear of the heartbreak I know to be sure.

Earth tends to vivid green branches above
That echo with a feeling I'd presumed was love.
But now that the dream world has broken in two,
I'm lost on the sidelines, unsure what to do.

I've only been awake for half of my life,
A good chunk a proverb of ash-riddled spite.
How do I stop myself from halving this whole?
Surely there's some way to turn dust into gold.

Microscopic planning stages bristle through,
Time is but an illusion to the truth.
While I try to convince myself what's done is done,
Too much of me wishes that I had won.

Drifting closer I rotate within clear view,
A reminder of what should have been rebuked.
A fire leaps and then I see upon the stars,
Just what logic's been tearing me apart.

But as I come in closer and gravity pulls,
I feel my shattered body hinder the angels.
I don't want to be a comet but the deed is done,
This pale dawning horizon is what's won!

...But it's not over until I say it's done.

Impossibly, I resist the urge to close,
And in this decision, all of my heart enfolds.
I've seen my stubbornness that I now decry.
With adamancy, I relegate the sky.

Although my heart is shattered by unhanded words,
It's made of a simple lesson we all must learn;
Not every clear horizon sees a sunlit day,
But not every darkened sky is in your way.

I turn away from my one-transfixed gravity,
Finally, in open darkness I can see.
I don't know what I'm doing or what comes next,
I don't even know if it's for the best.

...But I will fight until I've labored this last test.

Darkness

Solitary stationary, I glance above the trees,
My eyes seeking the sunken sun's last glance.
Mourning echoes carefully through every little branch
As the sinking light gives way to blackened skies.
This cloud, or this one? Perhaps it is neither.
One of them hinders while the other discovers
The truth: Light fades, discord raises his claws
To slash grotesque distortions of reality into view.

I'd say God knows why if I could see Him anymore.
If He was planning on leaving, then what did He create us for?
Puppeteering motions ring out 'neath the hollow ground.
Upside down sycophants echo their choir's sound.

I doubt it's illusion, I doubt it's intrusion,
I can't whisper to the light anymore. Not when it
Feels inconsistent, too reminiscent of whatever I was
Hoping to find.

(And it happens once or twice whenever your shadow crosses mine)

Do I even seek solace? I'm starting to wonder if it's better for me to lay here,
In this restless remission, garnered by the transmission of realization in the air.

So carve up these eyes! Finally, let it be!
I've been loyal so long I've no voice left to scream!
By chalice I wonder if taste will leave too
Although hearing and touch are bound to pull through,
So maybe my tongue is safe.

Forgiveness, a mission? Don't call me a fraud,
Sacrilegious empathy will only give you cause to sink,
And to find your own doubt in your palms,
Scripted by the robe, white blankets, black walls.

And while the light leaves, I am given back to the ground.
Soul is just a metaphor for the hope we blindly follow to the end.
While I doubt anyone will think on this, I can only wallow
In the vain, vapid entropy of living.

Light

Consider for a second the monster that lingers beneath your bed.
Now think back to the last time you saw him and heard the words he said.

No, I agree, I've never heard an utterance from below.
Not even a thump or a growl or a plea of wanting to go home.
Why, yes, a monster needs a cozy blanket to sleep!
He uses the knitting his mother taught him and the wool of his loyal sheep.
Of course a monster has a family! No, I didn't think you knew.
Not many people consider the fact that monsters can love too.

Now take your mind out from underneath and raise it to the sky,
To the birds and the clouds beyond where someday our souls will ride.
Okay, so maybe I don't know for sure, and I won't force you to believe.
It's just the teachings of your grandpa's family that used to help me fall asleep.
Anyway, clouds are puffy and white at the start of a beautiful sunny day,
But then they gray, blacken, and shoot lightning as it starts to rain.
Science says its precipitation, my dad said it's God's tears,
For even God has to cry sometimes to quell His anxieties and fears.

Moving along, how about we talk about something that you like?
What was that dinosaur in your book, I think its name started with "Tri."
Yes, I agree, the Velociraptor's the coolest one I know,
For nothing says swift seizer more than its sickle-shaped toe.
...Well, I'm not sure, but I'd have to assume that they felt lonely too.
Why do you ask? It seems like something has you a little blue.
No, no, you don't have to tell me, but don't bottle it up inside.
It'll only hurt the more you decide it should run and hide.

...

Well, yes, of course, I miss her too, I miss her every day.
But I can tell you a little secret that keeps my tears away.
Your mother could glance anywhere and see the beauty all around,
In every obvious smile and even in the most devilish frown.
It's unexplainable the way she could see the brightness in the dark.
So one day I asked her how she lived with such an optimistic heart.
Now I don't know if her answer will make sense to you just now,
But I do hope that what she told me will turn away that frown.

She looked at me, her eyes full of exuding, unconditional love.
And she said, "Maybe sitting here, existing, is enough."

Yes, the monster, the raptor, and God all had mothers too,
And they miss them with every mile of the excursion they go through.
Just like you, sometimes they can't stop the way that tears of grieving sting,
But just imagine the untold memories that she can bring.
She taught the monster how to knit and the raptor how to eat,
Even God had to have misbehaved at His mother's feet.
So while I won't lie and tell you the journey ahead isn't bound to be rough,
Existing as a light within this world; that can be enough.

(...Goodnight)

“FEED THE SHEEP!”



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omen@hampshire.edu!**